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Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) SUCCESS STORY

Community and Government Unity Deliver Unprecedented Benefits

Unprecedented cooperation between local government and community yields fresh optimism.



Photo: USAID/CCI

District Governor of Kajaki encourages community support at the initial Kajaki Cohesion Jirga.

“This is a good time for us to help each other and to work towards unity.”

- Maulawi Abdul Qayoum

May 2014 – International attention in Hilmand has until recently focused on large-scale rehabilitation projects like the Kajaki Dam, which is intended to supply power to much of southern Afghanistan. While nearly \$270 million was dedicated to the dam, little assistance flowed to the broader community, with many districts and villages remaining Taliban strongholds. In September 2013, Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) commenced programming in northern Hilmand’s Kajaki District, after identifying an opportunity to build upon recent security gains by Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF), a committed and influential District Governor (DG), and village elders who for the first time actively requested GIRoA support.

After determining an appropriate engagement approach, CCI organized a Cohesion Jirga to initiate district-wide dialogue to assess sources of instability and resiliencies in Kajaki District. Testament to community enthusiasm, 190 participants attended the Jirga, including the DG, Afghan National Police (ANP) Chief and the head of the District Community Council. Also attending the Jirga was Maulawi Abdul Qayoum, a respected religious scholar who proclaimed that “Peace and brotherhood is a blessing from God,” and appealed for everyone to assist the government in promoting stability. Another participant said, “I am hopeful for the outcomes of this Jirga and that the government will develop projects in Kajaki soon.”

The positive momentum and optimism from the Cohesion Jirga enabled CCI to facilitate capacity building training for local government officials, covering administrative management, public service coordination and strategic planning. Improved organizational capacity allowed government to better identify community priorities and participate fully in the management of subsequent small-scale infrastructure and training programs funded by CCI.

Kajaki has since benefitted from tailoring and electrician training courses, plus two activities aimed at improving irrigation techniques for the predominantly agricultural community. CCI district teams report the community is contributing unprecedented levels of volunteer labor to support these projects, with Kajaki tribal elders leveraging their influence to keep project sites safe and secure from Taliban attacks. Six more irrigation projects are planned following a recent Farmer’s Day celebration, and training successfully implemented in response to community requests for updated agricultural practices and information to increase crop yields. This united approach between Kajaki residents and government augurs well for achieving increased stability and better district prosperity.